Pre-Columbian Civilizations

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1 Rise of the Incan Empire

On the edge of western South America wedged between Earth's driest desert, largest rainforest and second-highest mountain range laid a sprawling empire. The Inca, through ingenious engineering and strict central planning, forged one of the world's most unusual empires. It was the largest empire in the Pre-Columbian Americas without a written language, the wheel or money and one of the only empires to stretch upwards rather than across. In this video, we will look at how the Inca rose to power from unknown origins and dominated their region. When Columbus arrived in the Americas in 1492, he was unaware that about 2,000 kilometers away laid a bustling empire of 2 million square kilometers. Tahuantinsuyu or the Land of the Four Quarters as the Inca called their realm, included parts of modern Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Argentina. It had a population of more than 10 million across innumerable ethnic groups and languages. The Inca developed in near isolation so their culture was missing many things that were vital in the Old World. The wheel was absent along with any draft animal capable of pulling weight. Steel and iron were unknown while gold, silver and bronze were masterfully worked. Most intriguing was that they lacked a written language so their knowledge was passed on orally or through a unique system of knots called Quipu. These knots were used to collect data, keep records, measure taxes and record the census. However, as the Spanish established control over the Inca, the ability to read Quipu faded away and the records are now indecipherable to us. Therefore, most of the history we have about the Inca has come down to us through Spanish historians or oral traditions. With that in mind, let's take a look at the origins of the Inca Empire. Ancient Peru was one of the ancient cradles of civilization and between 8000 and 3000 BC, the people there domesticated llamas and alpacas along with an immense variety of crops such as potatoes, corn, beans, peanuts, squashes and quinoa. From these early agricultural societies a series of complex cultures emerged such as Tiwanaku, Wari and Chimu. By 900 AD, states like Tiwanaku were erecting huge stone structures, building highways and canals and maintaining a capital of 50,000 people at a time when London had around 30,000 all at 3,000 metres above sea level. The Inca were the final great society to emerge here and inherited much from those that came before. As the Chimu Empire was at its peak, to its south the tiny kingdom of Cusco slumbered. This small kingdom would rapidly transform into Tahuantinsuyu or what we call the Inca Empire. Where exactly did the Inca come from? Well, let's take a look at the Inca's own mythological origin story. It begins with the Great Creator God Viracocha, who came upon three caves. From the central cave, Viracocha brought forth four brothers and four sisters. These were to be the founders of the Inca civilization. Out of the side caves stepped others, who were to be the forebearers of the other less important Inca clans. One of the brothers, Ayar Manco, armed with a golden staff capable of testing soil led his people on an Exodus-like journey at the end of which he was the only remaining brother. Upon entering the Valley of Cusco, the golden staff sank into the ground and so his people settled there. The city of Cusco was founded and Ayar Manco adopted the name Manco Capac. This is one of the many origin myths of the Inca. The myth would be regularly changed and updated for political reasons. For example, if the Inca wanted to integrate a foreign state or power into their empire, then that entity would conveniently find itself wedged into the current mythology. But Manco Capac was probably a real person that led a group of nomads into the valley and founded Cusco in the early 13th century. The history of the first eight Inca kings is lost in the mists of time. Its ninth king was the first to step

into certain history. An Inca Alexander the Great called Cusi Yupanqui rose to power in the early 1400s. At the time of his birth, the Kingdom of Cusco was barely more than a chiefdom. He was not the first in line to the throne, but after Cusco was besieged by 40,000 enemy Chanka soldiers and his king father and prince brother fled the city, It was Cusi Yupanqui who organized a defense and not only saved the city, but also won himself the crown. Before his reign, his kingdom held the small territory around Cusco. But within a single lifetime, he and his son had stretched the new empire from present-day Bolivia to Ecuador. He adopted the name Pachacuti, which means Earthshaker or He who turns the World upside down. Through the use of spies, Pachacuti would assess the military strength and wealth of the other states in the region. After collecting this information, he would send messages to the leaders of these states attempting to persuade them to join his empire. He promised they would keep their position and would grow even more powerful. Luxury goods and riches would be poured upon them only however, if they submitted peacefully. If they accepted, the heirs of that ruler would be sent to the Royal Court in Cusco whereupon they would be educated in an Inca fashion and raised to be perfect Incas. Once transformed, they were then sent back to rule their realms in a thoroughly Inca style. If they did not accept, they were usually crushed by the huge multi-ethnic army Pachacuti built. Pachacuti reorganized the kingdom of Cusco into Tahuantinsuyu, using a federalist system. He split the empire into four parts or suyus, each managed by provincial governors that reported directly to the central government in Cusco. Cusco was transformed into a suitable Imperial City and center to Pachacuti's new empire. The city was paved with perfectly cut stone and from its center spread vast highways linking all the suyus. Along with these highway projects, Pachacuti also initiated the construction of huge royal estates, the most famous of which is Machu Picchu located 2,430 metres above sea level. The rapid growth of the empire was incredible and even more impressive was the idea that the Inca actually tried to integrate the conquered peoples into their empire rather than just setting up mostly independent tributary states like the Aztecs had done. By the time Pachacuti's grandson Huayna Capac sat on the throne, there was hardly anything else left to possibly conquer. Militarily, the Inca were extremely organized and used a flexible decimal system to organize units. They could raise armies of hundreds of thousands of soldiers and moved them across rough terrain with ease. Almost all able-bodied men between 25 and 50 had military training. Each province would send men to join a military campaign whenever needed. The state made sure that no province was sending more men than they could and on particularly long campaigns, men were regularly allowed to return home to make sure their lives did not fall out of order. Like the Aztecs, the Inca relied on cotton armor. They wore thick alpaca wool tunics and helmets to protect themselves. These tunics were so effective at stopping arrows that Spanish soldiers adopted them while fighting the Inca and there are reports of them leaving battles looking like porcupines with dozens of arrows wedged in their armor. A large shield made of hardwood imported from their jungle provinces was kept on their back. Another much smaller shield made of lighter wood was kept on the arm. A small cape attached to it could be used to protect their legs from missiles. As the empire was so diverse, they relied on an equally diverse range of weapons and soldiers. Men recruited from the jungle provinces were excellent bowmen while those from the other provinces preferred dart throwers and slings. For melee combat, the Inca had a varied arsenal. Spears, axes, clubs, star-headed maces and halberds were the most common weapons and could be made from stone, bronze or bone. The Inca were talented with bolas, which were multiple stones tied together that wrapped around an enemy's

legs. These would be used effectively against the Spanish cavalry. The Inca used their military to expand their reach across the spine of South America, crushing resistance wherever it showed its head. In less than 100 years, they created the greatest empire in the Americas. But how did they keep it all functioning? And how did they keep ten million mouths fed in a land of extremes?

2 Peak of the Incan Empire

The Inca built an empire that, if placed over the old world, would stretch from St. Petersburg to Cairo. They transformed a hostile landscape into an agricultural marvel and developed a culture with such respect for the dead that corpses were engaging in politics decades after life had left them. In this video, we will look at how the Inca adapted to their environment and became what British historian Félipe Fernández-Armesto called "the most impressive Empire builders of their day."

Most of the Inca heartland is 3,000 meters above sea level and has low rainfall, low temperatures, and thin soils. It can drop below freezing every single month at this altitude. "There is nowhere else on earth," said anthropologist John Murray, "where millions insist, against all apparent logic, on living at 10,000 or even 14,000 feet above sea level. Nowhere else have people lived for so many thousands of years in such visibly vulnerable circumstances."

The one advantage to this environment, though, was the enormous ecological variety. Due to the massive fluctuations in altitude, you can encounter more than 20 different life zones within a few hundred kilometers. The Inca used this to their advantage. A diverse range of crops was planted in different ecological zones and at different altitudes to insure against famines caused by climatic changes or diseases, as not all zones would be affected similarly. Any surplus food was stored in warehouses controlled by the state for insurance against famine and drought, and a kind of freeze-dried potato was developed, called Chuño, to preserve potatoes in these warehouses for longer periods.

As llamas cannot pull a plow very well, all plowing and farming was done by hand. Ancient Andean cultures soon realized that a large group could plow a field much faster than a single farmer. This soon developed into a complex system of reciprocity and cooperation, which became a pivotal trait to nearly all Andean cultures. In times of famine, supplies would be redistributed to those in need. Widows, the sick, and people too old for work were taken care of and had their lands worked for them. With such an extreme environment, the Inca had to develop these kinds of safeguards to ensure society ran smoothly. Total cooperation from all members of society was necessary, a trait which led to one of the strangest parts of Inca society: the complete lack of markets.

It is hard for us to imagine, but the Inca civilization functioned nearly entirely without money. The production, storage, and distribution of goods were wholly controlled by the central Inca government. Each citizen received and contributed food, tools, and clothing to and from state-owned warehouses and needed to purchase nothing. Taxes were not collected in money, since there was none, and neither were they collected in other valuables. Instead, taxes were collected in the form of human labour in a system called Mit'a. Through the use of Mit'a, the central government could move workers across the Empire and focus them on what the highest priority tasks were. Mining, sowing, and construction are just a few of the tasks that were carried out by Mit'a workers. This is how the Inca were able to complete massive projects in their short, 100-year reign.

A primary trait of Andean civilizations is their relationship with llamas and alpacas, the only large domesticable animal in the region. Llamas and alpacas were essential to Inca society. They could not only help by carrying goods, but also by providing meat and, most importantly, cloth. This cloth was everything to the Inca. It kept the state functioning, it clothed the people, it functioned as a marker of rank, and well-made cloth was regularly gifted to people that pleased the Emperor. Cloth was so tightly regulated that the government even issued people their outfits. Each province of the Inca Empire

was given some of these state-owned herds and had to produce a certain amount of cloth each year that would be stored in the state-owned warehouses.

The Inca warehouses, called Quallqa, were built along the Inca highway system, one every 22 kilometers or so. An immense variety of goods were stored there, and they could be distributed whenever needed. The storehouses were a response to the challenges of the Andean environment. The lack of navigable rivers, wheeled vehicles, or large draft animals meant that goods couldn't be transported long distances easily. So, these warehouses were constructed within walkable distances. They also allowed armies to march across the realm without weapons and equipment slowing them down, as they could equip themselves at the warehouse closest to their destination.

One of the most essential elements in the success of the Inca Empire was the remarkable system of highways, extending for at least 40,000 kilometers. These highways had to pass over mountains, and frightening suspension bridges were common. Relay stations, called Tambos, dotted the highway, stationed by runners or chasquis. These were the fastest men from the nearby town who would run from one Tambo to another with gifts, khipu, or messages. This system allowed the Incas to send information across 392 kilometres in a day. The Roman Empire, even with mounted messengers, could rarely get a message over 320 kilometres away in a day.

Along with these huge highway projects, the Inca cut through mountainsides, building cisterns, terraces, and irrigation canals to increase agricultural productivity. At the Empire's peak in the 16th century, over a million hectares of terraces were in use. A terrace was constructed by building a retaining wall and then laying gravel, then sand, and then soil on top of each other, forming a step. This captured water that would otherwise rush down the hillside and prevented flooding by filtering the water slowly. It also provided a way to stop crops from freezing, as the stones would absorb heat from the Sun and retain it through the cold Andean nights. In an environment where only 2% of the land is suitable for agriculture, the Inca transformed their heartland into an agricultural powerhouse.

Finally, there's the magnificent Inca stonework. The Inca used perfectly fitted stones that could stick together without the use of mortar. They fit stones together like enormous jigsaw pieces. They were so well fitted a pin could not pass through most of the joints. Major Inca constructions have also been found to be earthquake-proof. These rocks were quarried, shaped, and moved using mostly stone tools and rope.

That is the physical Inca realm, but what was their spiritual realm made up of? The Inca believed wholeheartedly in the idea that the spirit realm and ours were linked and that the dead could influence events in our world. One of the most unusual manifestations of this belief was Inca mummification. These Mallqui, as the Inca called them, were not the typical way to spend your afterlife. Only members of influential families were regularly mummified, and the corpse was treated as if it were living. They were fed, dressed, and cared for as if nothing was different. In return, the dead would protect their families, maintain fertile land, and ensure a steady supply of water. They were consulted in all critical life matters and asked about how to proceed during troubling times.

The mummies of Inca rulers received an unimaginable level of care and respect. They lived an afterlife enviable to the living. Dead Inca rulers were meticulously preserved, so much so that the Spanish discovered people worshiping them long after the Empire had fallen. Even in death, Inca Nobles still maintained control of all their wealth, land, and estates. What is odd to us made perfect sense to the Inca, as mummies were seen as living creatures.

This strange belief contributed to both the rise and fall of the Inca. As the wealth of a dead Emperor was not passed on to his successor, it was instead managed by their Panaca, which was a kind of royal family group tasked with preserving mummies. So, new Emperors could not use the wealth of their predecessor, and new conquests and constructions had to commence immediately to secure wealth and power. As all the good land around Cusco fell under the control of dead rulers and their strange mummy corporations, Emperors had to spend significant amounts of time and effort on campaigns far away from the Empire centre. This expanded the Empire quickly but allowed little time for consolidation. Competing Panacas vied for power so intensely and ruthlessly that Machiavelli himself would blush, and Medici would take notes. When the Spanish arrived, they would use these competing families against one another to weaken the Empire.

Despite all their monumental buildings and works, and despite the kind of guaranteed welfare that the Inca state provided, they were still plagued with revolts. Their Empire didn't have a lot of time to consolidate their rule. When the Spanish arrived, the Empire was barely 100 years old. Loyalties from conquered ethnic groups were fickle, and emperors had to deal with many bloody revolutions during their reigns.

No Inca Emperor dealt with more of these than Huayna Capac, who spent most of his reign pacifying newly conquered territory. However, he isn't remembered today as being the revolt-smashing Emperor. No, he's remembered as the first Inca Emperor to die of smallpox, and his death kicked off a massive Inca civil war just as the Spanish first arrived.

3 Spanish Conquest of the Incan Empire

500 years ago, atop the snowcapped Andes, in a still barely mapped continent, thousands of meters above sea level, two new empires smashed into each other, in a historical collision that reverberates into the modern day. Conquistador and Sapa Inca, men from different worlds, will clash. The arquebus and huaraca will meet and Tawantinsuyu, the Land of Four Parts Together will be undone. In 1528 Hernán Cortes had just returned from Mexico bringing tales of conquest along with unimaginable treasures. The Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain Charles the 5th received him and his riches in Toledo. As Cortés impressed the royal court, another veteran of the New World had arrived at the city. It was Francisco Pizarro, the second cousin of Cortés. Pizarro had arranged to meet the King and planned to impress him with gifts. Gold, silver, feathers, natives, and bizarre creatures unknown outside of the Andes. Pizarro told his King of the magical land of Peru, home to a native Empire that Pizarro assured him could be conquered in his name. On the 26th of July 1529, Pizarro was issued a royal license to conquer this new land and named the Governor of Peru. Armed with a royal permission, Pizarro set off recruiting potential conquistadors. He returned to his hometown of Trujillo, gathered his four brothers, Juan, Francisco, Gonzalo, and Hernando, and then set sail for the Americas in January 1530. The Sapa Inca, Huayna Capac had recently subdued much of what is now Ecuador when reports began trickling in. Strange men had traded with the city of Tumbez. Alongside these reports came others, that were much more horrific. Chasquis runners arrived daily informing the Sapa Inca that a disease had appeared in the north and was killing thousands. Nothing like it had ever been seen before Plagues were unknown to the Inca so this strange sickness, known to us as smallpox, ravaged the population. The Eurasian disease was not brought by Pizarro however, as it arrived slightly before he did, creeping in from North and Central America. In the following years, up to 90% of the Empire would succumb to the disease. Sometime around 1527 the Sapa Inca Huayna Capac and his heir died from smallpox along millions of their subjects. Two years before Pizarro had petitioned the King of Spain, Eurasian germs had initiated the conquest for him. With the succession now unclear and the realm devastated, the sons of Huayna Capac both tried to claim the throne and tossed the Empire into chaos. Atahualpa, who possessed much less territory than Huascar, controlled his dead father's veteran legions and slowly pushed down from Quito towards Cuzco. During the final bloody climax of the war in 1532 Huacar's remaining armies were smashed outside of Cuzco and he was captured by Atahualpa's generals. Atahualpa has camped over 900 kilometers away in the town of Cajamarca, with a small portion of his army, awaiting news of the battle. Even with the Inca's exceptional highway and their tireless chasquis, it would take five days for word of the victory to reach Atahualpa. There, in Cajamarca Atahualpa planned his eventual coronation as the supreme ruler of the Inca world. He was eager to get word from his generals and set off on his victory march towards his new capital. But there was just one small detail that he needed to deal with at the moment. Reports were coming in from his chiefs that a small band of 168 foreigners, some of whom were riding giant llamas, was causing havoc on the coast and it appeared they were now marching straight for Cajamarca. Atahualpa was curious and rather than have these men killed he decided to see them and their strange llamas himself. What could 168 do against his 50,000 soldiers? He had agreed to meet the Spaniards in the central plaza of Cajamarca. This was a ceremonial meeting between his vast empire and some lowly visitors. So on Saturday, November 16, 1532, Atahualpa entered the

square at Cajamarca followed by 6,000 of his barely armed men. A battle was not expected. Atahualpa was quite confident, as just the day before he heard of his victory at Cuzco and the capture of his rival brother Huascar. So, this was a day of celebration. Once he had his meeting with this odd band of foreigners, he could march south and have his glorious coronation. Pizarro and his men had planned to emulate Cortés: they would capture Atahualpa, thus cutting off the head of the Inca Empire and paralyzing it. Atahualpa as Sapa Inca was Supreme ruler of the Empire and it could not function without him. Pizarro had hidden his men in the buildings surrounding the square and stationed the artillery and arquebuses on the far side of the square ready to fire. Like too many fans in a tiny football stadium, the Inca troops crowded into the square, which had only two narrow exits. Not a single Spaniard could be seen. As the sun began to set, nothing could be heard in the square except for a slight breeze. The fear inside the stone buildings was incalculable. Pedro Pizarro said, "I heard that many Spaniards urinated on themselves without noticing it from sheer terror." Eventually, two men appeared from the buildings and approached Atahualpa. Vincente de Valverde, a Dominican friar, and an inexperienced native translator. The friar read following to Atahualpa. "I request and require you... to recognize the Church as your Mistress and as Governess of the World and Universe... And if you do not do this... with the help of God we shall come mightily against you, and we shall make war on you everywhere and in every way that we can, and we shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and His Majesty, and we shall seize your women and children, and we shall make them slaves, to sell and dispose of as His Majesty commands. And we shall do all the evil and damage to you that we are able. And I must insist that the deaths and destruction that result from this will be all your fault!" This was the Requerimiento, a document read aloud to the native people's of the New World. Informing them of Spain's divine right to conquer these lands in the name of God. Valverde then approached Atahualpa and offered him a bible. Atahualpa had heard reports of the men's fascination with these objects, but he had no way to contextualize what this was or how to interact with it. He had had enough with these foreigners now and their disrespect for the Inca diplomatic customs. Atahualpa scolded Valverde and the Spanish for stealing from warehouses and killing Inca chiefs and proceed to toss the book aside. Valverde, horrified at this perceived act of extreme blasphemy sprinted towards the stone buildings, shouting, "Come out! Come out, Christians! Come at these enemy dogs who reject the things of God!". The square again fell silent. With loud roars the cannons and arquebuses soon fired directly into the mass of warriors, spewing out smoke and metal shrapnel. Inca soldiers, shocked by the sounds, soon saw beasts riding towards them. The Spanish war cry "Santiago" was screamed as men rushed out of the buildings. A massacre ensued, as the panic-stricken Inca force tried to retreat out of the tiny square. Dazed masses of soldiers ran for the narrow exits. It was impossible to escape: thousands died trampled under their comrades or horses. Chopping through the men holding the royal litter Pizarro and his men grabbed Atahualpa and dragged him back into one of the stone buildings. Just that morning he was basking in a victory that took four years to complete, Atahualpa was now, at sunset, prisoner to an unknown group of people. The Inca Empire, which only just finished a destructive civil war was now involved in the highest stakes hostage situation of all time. The survivors of the massacre ran from the square and the rest of the Inca army now leaderless dispersed into the countryside. Atahualpa noted the excitement the Spaniards had at finding gold trinkets amongst the wreckage. He concluded that these were pirates from some faraway land. If he could give them enough gold, then they would return to

their ships and begone. He told Pizarro that in exchange for his life and freedom he would fill the room they were in with gold and twice over with silver. Atahualpa delivered on his promise. For months the greatest treasures and artifacts of the Inca empire poured into Cajamarca. The room was filled, and everything was melted down into ingots, which is why gold or silver Inca artifacts are so rare today. In the end, the gold totaled 1.3 million pesos de oro, or around 400m 2018 US Dollars, to be divided between between168 men and the King of Spain. As the ransom poured in so did more Spanish troops. Diego de Almagro, Pizarro's business partner, arrived with an extra 153 men. The fact that more Spaniards have arrived made it clear that this was an invasion force. These men were here to stay. After the Inca fulfilled their promise, it became obvious to Pizarro and his men that Atahualpa had outlived his usefulness and was now only a liability. If he were rescued they would not be able to defeat the resistance he would organize. On July 26th, 1533, Atahualpa was brought into the main square of Cajamarca and was tied to a wooden stake. The native population gathered around in awe at what was happening. Atahualpa was not only the supreme ruler of the Empire but also their god. Watching this happen must have shaken the entire world-view of the local people. Valverde, the same friar that offered him a bible month before, came to him and offered to be baptized. If he rejected this offer, he would be burned alive. No fate could be worse for Atahualpa. If his body were not perfectly preserved like previous Emperor's, then he would not pass on correctly to the afterlife. He accepted and was quickly baptized. Still, he was then strangled to death as a Christian. The conquistadors soon left Cajamarca and began the long trek to Cuzco. As the square and that lonely stake in its center faded into the distance, Pizarro and his men must have felt confident that this wealthy empire was already in their hands. But the conquest of the Inca was far from over.

4 Great Inca Rebellion

The body of the god king Atahualpa lay partially burned in a hastily dug ditch near Cajamarca. His empire was now in the hands of Francisco Pizarro and his brothers. On their long march towards Cuzco they encountered the teenage brother of Huascar - Manco Inca and placed him on the throne. Wielding power through this puppet-King the conquistadors were welcomed into Cuzco as liberators rather than conquerors. The new Inca-Spanish military alliance crushed all forces within the Empire that had remained loyal to Atahualpa's faction. With the massive Empire now firmly in his grip and a military alliance secured with Manco Inca. Pizarro and his brothers set about transforming Tawantinsuyu into New Castile. The land and lordship over natives were handed out to Pizarro's men. Those few hundred conquistadors, many of them poor and illiterate, soon found themselves rich beyond their wildest expectations. After Manco Inca's coronation in Cuzco, both leaders of the Spanish expedition would leave the city. Francisco Pizarro would go to the coast to found the city now known as Lima and Diego de Almagro, frustrated that Pizarro had been named the sole governor of Peru and furious that Pizarro had refused to share Atahualpa's ransom with him and his men, departed with 570 Spanish cavalry and foot soldiers and with twelve thousand native troops. His goal was to conquer the southern part of the Inca Empire in what is now Chile. The Inca Capital, Cuzco, was now left in the hands of Manco Inca and Pizarro's two younger brothers, Juan and Gonzalo. Manco Inca tried to get to work rebuilding his fractured and smallpox ridden realm but with Juan and Gonzalo now in charge of the city the illusion of an equal alliance between the Emperor and the Pizarros quickly shattered. Juan and Gonzalo harassed Manco Inca for gold, silver, and native women. They soon began to disrespect him in public and then Gonzalo Pizarro kidnapped and raped Manco Inca's wife, Cura Ocllo. Soon he was imprisoned and beaten. Manco Inca now became aware of the horrific bargain he had made for the title of Sapa Inca. Tensions had reached a boiling point. In early November of 1535, two years after the death of Atahualpa, the puppet king Manco took his first steps towards rebellion. A secret meeting of the Inca nobility was called and Manco made a speech to his chiefs. "I ask you! Where did we meet them, what is it that we owe them or which one of them did we injure so that with these horses and weapons of iron they have made such cruel war on us? It seems to me that it would be neither just nor honest that we put up with this. Rather, we should strive with the utmost determination to either die to the last man or to kill our cruel enemies." Manco fled the city into the harsh Andes and soon the Inca war machine began to slowly creek into motion. Chasquis runners breathlessly crisscrossed the Empire, bringing word of Manco's rebellion to the native chiefs. Soon the conquistadors – now the feudal lords were individually lured away from their palaces and manors and clubbed to death. Within months these small-scale attacks had killed more Spaniards than had died in the entire conquest thus far. As reports of these deaths trickled into Cuzco and Lima, far off in the mountains native soldiers started gathering clubs, axes, spears, and halberds from their warehouses and marching across the Andes to answer the call of their Emperor. The 20-year-old great-great grandson of Pachacuti, who served as a meek puppet for two years was now at war with the invaders from across the sea. Like a giant blanket covering the hillsides, the immense legions of Manco converged on Cuzco. Hernando, Juan, and Gonzalo Pizarro were now trapped inside, along with 196 Spaniards, a handful of African slaves and Morisca women, and hundreds of native allies. Early in the morning on Saturday the 6th of May 1536, conch shell trumpets rang out from the

mountains surrounding Cuzco. A curtain of javelins, rocks, and arrows darkened the sky while 100,000 soldiers wielding massive spears and clubs began to slowly make their way down the hillside, encircling the glittering city. The constant barrage forced the defenders to immediately run for cover. Inca troops poured into the city and forced the Spaniards to retreat into 2 buildings located in the main plaza. Manco knew from the experience that Inca weapons were ineffective against Spanish armour and cavalry. It was near impossible for an Inca to kill a Spaniard in a hand to hand combat. No matter the strength behind a blow or the bravery of the warrior, stone and bronze would never pierce steel. The Spanish could only be killed if knocked from their horses or with a direct impact to the face. Manco's strategy was to tighten a noose around the city, trap the Spaniards, and then overwhelm them with his superior numbers. In a panic the Spaniards darted between the two buildings now transformed into bunkers. Hernando Pizarro was screaming orders and doing his best to reinforce his position. But before they could even formulate a real plan the roof of the buildings caught fire. Inca slingers and archers were firing red hot rocks and flaming arrows into the city. The trapped Spaniards soon found themselves suffocating from the smoke. Hot ashes filled the air. Broken beams fell from the ceiling tossing up fresh burning embers. As the heat became more intense it seemed all hope was lost... until suddenly the fire went out. Some Spaniards claim to have seen the Virgin Mary herself descended from heaven and put out the flames. The Inca chroniclers report that it was the African slaves that the Spanish had stationed on the roof who put it out under a barrage of arrows and rocks. The Incas continued to heave against the Spanish defences. Unable to cut through their armour or defend against a cavalry charge, they swarmed the city and laid a noose around the precarious Spanish position. At the end of the day they had to cease the attack, barricade the streets they had taken, and rest. From his command center nearby in Calca Manco Inca, no doubt was certain that within days he would see his men storm the Spanish holdout and bring him victory. The siege dragged on however. As months passed new strategies had to be developed. The Inca tore apart roads and streets in order to neutralize cavalry charges. They feigned retreats down narrow alleys in order to lure horsemen into traps. Bolas, a weapon normally reserved for hunting, was introduced in order to tie up charging horses' legs. The battle for Cuzco was brutal and long. Spaniards on horses charged at Inca soldiers down narrow streets and the entire city was essentially reduced to ashes. "In the city," one eyewitness wrote, "the Indians waged such a fierce attack that the Spaniards thought themselves a thousand times lost." While he besieged Cuzco, Manco had sent his finest general, Quiso, to tie down Francisco Pizarro, who was currently in Lima. Quizo was an excellent tactician. He had realized that attacking cavalry on a level ground was a death sentence. Inca troops could do nothing against a charge. Instead he would use the terrain against them. Only meeting the Spanish on steep hills and mountains. There he would lure them into a tight pass, block the entrances with his troops and rain boulders down on the horses. Quizo managed to wipe out a total of 4 separate Spanish relief forces using these tactics and sent Spanish weapons and armour back to his Emperor at Cuzco. Francisco Pizarro started to panic: He had just sent more than a hundred horsemen to their deaths at the hands of Quizo, and now had 100 Spaniards to defend Lima. Just months before he had total control over the Inca. Now Cuzco was besieged, his brother Juan dead there, an army was outside Lima hunting down Spaniards, and more than a 1/3 of his forces were dead. Hearing of Quizo's unprecedented victories, Manco ordered him to proceed to Lima and destroy the city. Not to lay siege to it like he was doing back at Cuzco, but to destroy it. Lima was a Spanish city. Founded near the coast to facilitate

trade and unlike Inca cities it was built on a flat plain. Manco's excitement at Quizo's victories had blinded him to the fact the Quizo was using tactics that could not work at Lima. Ordering him to attack Lima was a grave error. Quizo assaulted the city and failed to take it. He attacked again and again and continued to be beaten back. But his Emperor had ordered him to take it and Quizo knew Manco needed him back at Cuzco, that he needed this city and Francisco Pizarro gone, nothing else would be sufficient. On the sixth day of the Siege of Lima, Inca troops again poured down from the hills and marched along the flat plain towards the city with general Quiso leading the charge, lance in hand, with his hand-selected vanguard. As he entered the city a sudden barrage of arquebuses roared and ripped through the front line. "Santiago!" was screamed as a cavalry charge rammed through the vanguard. As the dust settled and smoke cleared the Inca army soon saw their general laying on the ground with a Spanish lance in his heart. The greatest general the Inca had, was dead and his army soon disappeared into the mountains. Pizarro was now free to go break the Siege of Cuzco. Breathless Chasquis runner arrived from across the Empire. They brought unwelcome news to Manco. Quizo was dead, Pizarro was approaching, Diego de Almagro had returned from Chile, defeated, but still with a sizeable army, and Spanish reinforcements were arriving from the north. His fortunes, only so recently extremely promising had now taken a grim turn. He had lost and he knew it. The 10-month long siege of Cuzco was a failure. Manco assembled his chiefs and captains and with a solemn voice he informed his people that he would cede his treasures, his home, his empire and would retreat to the remote rainforest region of the Empire called Vilcabamba. From there he would try and fight another day. As Manco retreated deep into the rainforest he brought with him the mummies of all the Sapa Inca's that had ruled before him including his father Huayna Capac and his great-great grandfather Pachacuti. From Vilcabamba, Manco waged an aggressive guerilla style campaign against the Spanish. His soldiers ambushed supply convoys, raided new towns, stole caches of weapons and horses, and then vanished back into the rainforest. His men learned how to ride horses, fire guns, and fashion Spanish weapons. But population of Spaniards in Peru essentially doubled with each passing year. It became clear to Manco as he aged that survival was possible but Tawantinsuyu, a land of four parts together, would never be remade. His state would continue to survive in the rainforest. As Almagro died fighting a civil war against the Pizarros. As Francisco Pizarro was assassinated. While Hernando Pizarro rotted in a Spanish prison. As Gonzalo Pizarro was executed on the orders of the king. The Inca state clung to life for decades until eventually in 1572, 36 years after Manco's rebellion his son and the last Inca Emperor Tupac Amaru was captured and executed and the empire of Pachacuti was erased.

5 Rise of the Maya

city-states begin to emerge under the rule of divine kings and queens, transforming the area into something very similar to the ancient Greece, along with a similar amount of Shakespearean drama and conflict. It is during the Pre-Classic that we see the rise city states such as El Mirador, an enormous city state with a population that could have totaled around 250,000 people. El Mirador was home to El Tigre and La Danta, pyramids comparable in size to those at Giza. Unlike the Aztecs or Inca, the Maya never formed a united polity. There was never a Maya empire, but rather dozens of unique and competing city-states, united by a common culture, language family, and reliance on maize. By 300AD the Maya entered what we consider to be their Classic Period. An explosion of activity commenced as powerful city-states began to arise along with massive irrigation projects, beautiful stone monuments, and gorgeous plazas. The Maya writing system became widespread and it allows us to read about the Maya in their own words. Tikal (Teak-Al), one of the most powerful Classic Maya city-states has dozens of examples of this writing. By reading the stelae located across Tikal we can learn of such rulers like Yik'in Chan K'awiil (Yek-In Khan Caw-wheel), or Sun Sky Rain. He ascended to the throne on the 8th of December 734AD, a date we are certain of because we can rely on the advanced Maya calendar dates inscribed at the site. Tikal like most Maya cities was constructed around plazas - the centre of the city where the main ceremonial places, temples, pyramids and ball courts were. Under the rule of Yik'in Chan K'awiil (Yek-In Khan Caw-wheel) one of the most famous structures of Tikal - the Temple of the Great Jaguar was built. This massive 47-meter-tall pyramid was dedicated to his father who was buried within it. It soared above the tree tops and could be seen from across the city. So, how did the Maya construct these incredible stone structures? Maya architects had invented a concrete-like fill. They piled up rubble and limestone rich mud to form an incredibly durable foundation. The foundation, which initially appeared rough and ugly was then covered with another invention - Maya stucco. This white plaster made of limestone covered rubble with a smooth finish that could be easily molded into works of art. Once this process was complete the pyramid or structure was usually painted a bright red colour. Using this method, the Maya could continuously build taller and taller structures by simply covering the old pyramid in rubble and then plastering over it again. Thus, over thousands of years Maya cities constantly grew by paving over themselves. From the top of these pyramids rituals and ceremonies were carried out in full view of the city they towered above. Priests painted a bright blue colour and Kings or ajaws (A-How-S) as the Maya called them, would carry out these vital ceremonies, many of which needed to involve the most sacred substance in the Maya universe, blood. In the Maya worldview the gods created everything and therefore demanded something in return. This debt to the gods could be paid in many ways. The dancing, burning of incense, and even elegant words could be offered. But blood acted as the ultimate payment. Unlike the later Aztecs the Maya didn't not rely heavily on mass human sacrifice. Instead the most common offering was to pierce oneself, bleed onto some paper and then burn that as an offering. However sometimes the Gods required more. It was vital that the gods were provided with enough energy by way of sacrifice or else the Maya world would ceased to exist. As human life was considered the most sacred and precious thing in the world it therefore meant that a human life was the most powerful offering. Commoners were rarely if ever sacrificed as they were not seen as worthy enough for the gods. When a human sacrifice was offered it was almost always a captured noble or king as they were highly

prized by the gods and beheading was the common way of carrying out this sacrifice. Located near these pyramids there was almost always a ball court. The ball game played by the Maya and other Mesoamericans was an intense sport. The people watched these spectacles with a fanaticism that could have rivalled or even surpassed how the people of Constantinople would have watched chariot races. The game took place in a massive stone court and was played with a 3-4kg rubber ball. The exact specifics of the game are unknown, but we can piece together that the goal seems to have been for players to use only their hips, upper arms, and knees to move the ball in the air with the goal of making the other team drop the ball or pushing past a certain defensive line. The Ball Game was so important to the Maya that it a central role in the Maya religion, the gods themselves would play it against each other. Maize as the staple crop of the region also had divine status and was even central to the Maya mythological origin story. As recorded in the great epic, The Popol Vuh, of the K'iche Maya, the universe began as nothing. Into this great void the two gods Tepew and Q'ukumate spoke the world into existence. Creating all the animals and plants. But as these could not speak, the gods need to be worshiped could not be fulfilled. Thus, they created a race of men from mud who promptly collapsed back into mud, then a race of wooden men, but these proved to be unintelligent and so were destroyed by a great flood. Finally, the gods formed humans out of maize dough and these proved capable of worship and sacrifice. During the Classical period, which lasted from 300AD to 900AD more cities than ever had booming populations some ranging in the tens of thousands. During this period there is estimated to have been between 5 and 13 million Maya inhabiting the Yucatan. Cities like Tikal may have had populations of up to 90,000 in their urban cores. It is during this period the Maya nobility became much more organised. We see elegantly feathered ajaws, ruling over huge and complex royal courts. Priests, servants, courtiers, dancers, princes, scribes and generals all vied for the Ajaws attention. The nobility would have looked bizarre to us, as it was common for the Maya elites to intricately tattoo themselves, create intentional daily lives. In order to track these the Maya had to continuously watch the skies and develop a calendar capable of keeping track. Oddly enough the Mesoamericans developed 3 calendars. A solar calendar of 365 days, a sacred calendar of 260 days and the famous Long Count Calendar that tracked every day uniquely from 11th of August 3114 BC. Using these calendars, the Maya could calculate dates millions of years into the past or future and thus track the movement of planets and celestial bodies over long periods of time. The farthest date calculated by the Maya was a period of 23,040,000,000 days, which is about 63 million years. While the Maya were intellectual giants of their time, politics, greed and ambition still dominated the lives of the upper classes.

6 Maya Star War: Tikal - Calakmul War

The Maya civilization flourished in the 5th century AD and the stone cities jutting out of the rainforest housed millions. During this incredible era the Kings, gleaming with jade and vibrant feathers marching through the jungles with thousands of their obsidian wielding warriors are about to introduce total warfare to the Maya world. Two Maya superstates, home to the Temple of the Great Jaguar Paw - Tikal, and the massive Snake Kingdom - Calakmul will collide and cycle between moments of triumph and disaster for not only themselves, but their entire world. Maya warfare worked differently than that of Eurasia. As there were no draft animals, Maya armies would have to carry all of their own equipment and food. Porters were used, so soldiers wouldn't have to carry everything, but the longer the campaign the more porters would be needed to carry food, and soon more porters would be needed simply to carry food for the other porters. Campaigning was limited to the dry season, as the rains would make it impossible for the large groups to traverse the swamps and forests of the region. Therefore, Maya conquests and campaigns were short and they usually never travelled more than a 2 weeks march. Only when rivers were nearby do we see far flung warfare as canoes could be used to transport food and equipment. So rather than empires or massive kingdoms the Maya instead formed hegemonies and political leagues. Each state was technically independent but a complex system of lords and overlords, dynastic marriages, and intimidation allowed the stronger states to dominate the weaker ones. When the Maya states went to war they were short, bloody, and chaotic affairs. Wars were usually conducted by and for the Maya elites and so they were expected to do most of the fighting. The King and his entourage of elites formed the core of Maya armies. The Maya military was entirely infantry based. Armour wasn't worn for most of Maya history but when it was worn it was a thick cotton vest stuffed with rock salt. This kevlar like vest would have been extremely difficult to slice through. Nobles would have wanted to stand out on the battlefield in order to gain prestige and so it was common for them to be dressed in brightly coloured feathers and drape themselves in many different animal skins. For their weapons the Maya relied on short spears, usually tipped with chert or flint but nobles would often have obsidian tipped weapons and these were especially fearsome. According to the Lacandon Maya "A chert point will usually kill. An Obsidian point always kills". Along with these spears, swords like the Macuahuitl were used along with either hide or wooden shields. For their ranged weapons the Maya used blowguns, javelins, slings, and a weapon imported from the Mexican highlands, the atlatl or spear thrower. This powerful weapon could launch large spears at speeds up to 150km/h that knock a man off his feet before killing him. If the Popol Vuh of the K'iche Maya is to be believed the Maya had developed a type of early hand grenade. They hollowed out a gourd and filled it with wasps and bees, this was then tossed into a crowd of attackers and the furious insects would quickly cause mayhem. Most Maya books were burned so we have no military manuals or records and therefore the exact tactics and strategies they used are lost. But it seems Maya warfare was based on warriors dueling one on one, with the capture of high value targets such as kings being the primary goal. As the intensity and frequency of warfare increased defences were quickly erected around the cities. Walls and defensive ditches and moats became common towards the end of the Classic period. Mayapan for example, was surrounded by 9km long walls of stone up to 2.5 meters high and then topped with palisades. Cities like Aguateca and Tikal would use walls in combination natural barriers such as swamps and cliff-sides. A favourite defensive strategy of the Maya was to surrender their cities

with concentric walls. One inner wall that was much larger and easier to defend, and a smaller outer wall. When an attacker managed to get past the first wall they would find themselves stuck in what has been called a "kill zone". Defenders behind the much larger wall would fire down on the now pinned attackers. These defences combined with the general difficulty of the Yucatán's terrain made sieges quite rare and short. However, we do have evidence of Maya sieges taking place and in murals from Chichen Itzá we can see what some Maya sieges looked like, this one specifically involving siege towers against a fortified hill. During their Classic period the Maya began to chronicle their own history by carving the deeds of kings and generals upon thousands of giant steles that still dot the Yucatan. On some of these steles we hear of a foreign intrusion into the Maya world. The intruder was Teotihuacan, a sprawling metropolis, located in the Mexican highlands, at this time the most populated city in the Americas with up to 125,000 residents. Under the command of the warlord Siyaj K'ak (See-Yaw Kah-Ak) or "Fire is Born", Teotihuacano soldiers marched over 1000km towards Maya territory. On the 8th of January 378 they entered Tikal, then a rising power among the Maya cities and on the very same day the King of Tikal is said to have "Entered the Water", a Maya euphemism for death. A complete political takeover of Tikal was instituted and the ruler of Teotihuacan, Spearthrower Owl, had his own son put on the throne of Tikal. This mixed Teotihuacan-Maya dynasty brought the already rising city-state to the new heights. Soon cities like Bejucal, Rio Azul, Uaxactun, and Motul de San all fell under Tikal hegemony. It dominated not only the trade routes of the Maya lowlands but also the lucrative Caribbean Sea trade. According to Michael Coe "Until the arrival of Fire Is Born, the Maya remained politically fragmented, each city-state charting its own path. After 378 Maya culture blossomed, alliances were formed between city-states, and great advances in science and technology took place." But Tikal's dominance could not last forever. Directly to its north a serious contender was taking shape, Calakmul, a kingdom whose rulers referred to themselves as the Divine Lords of the Snake. Calakmul was the largest Classical Maya city, with an urban population of at least 50,000 and core covering 30km2. The entire kingdom had a population of over a million inhabitants. As the power of Calakmul grew so did the ambitions of its Snake kings. By installing dynasties in other cities, arranging well placed marriages, and through ingenious diplomacy a net of Calakmul aligned cities wrapped around Tikal. These two superpowers soon began to try and smoother but avoided direct conflict. They fought through a series of proxy wars instead in a Maya style Cold War. But an opportunity to directly strike at Tikal arose in 553AD. The King of Tikal Wak Chan K'awiil (Whack Can Kah-Wheel), had placed his preferred candidate on the throne of the city of Caracol. 3 years later relations between them collapsed completely and Caracol joined the Calakmul's league. The balance of power had tipped in Calakmul's favour. This is a "Star War" glyph. These star wars were usually decisive attacks that were coordinated to occur while Venus, the heavenly body the Maya associated with war, was passing overhead. In 562 a Calakmul Star War assault ended with Tikal being overrun and its leader Wak Chan K'awiil found himself upon a sacrificial stone at Calakmul. A dark age was started and for 130 years we hear nothing from Tikal. While Calakmul enjoyed its total control over the region a split seems to have formed within the Tikal dynasty. B'alaj Chan K'awiil (Baal-Ah), the son of the King of Tikal seems to have been sent to establish a new dynasty and rule the city of Dos Pilas in 629AD. Both cities still claimed the same royal title and used the same ancient Maya name. Shortly after this Tikal begins to step back out of the shadows. The brother of B'alaj Chan K'awiil, Nuun Ujol Chaak (Noon U-whole Cha-Ak) ascended to the Tikal

throne. An energetic and strong leader seems to have reinvigorated the declining city. A powerful figure, Yuknoom The Great had been ruling in Calakmul for over a decade and he was determined not to allow his rival any chance of recovery. Yuknoom attacked Dos Pilas in 650 and seems to have convinced it's King, B'alaj Chan K'awiil to join the Calakmul League. This turn of events must have horrified Nuun Chaak in Tikal. Calakmul was supposed to be the sworn enemy of them both, and yet now his brother was on Calakmul's side. Yuknoom pressed his advantage. In another Star War attack he attacked Tikal, storming over the walls and sacking the only recently recovered city, as Venus gleamed in the sky above. His kingdom was once again shattered and Nuun Ujol Chaak was forced to accept Yuknoom as his overlord. It would take 15 years of waiting in order for Nuun to feel like Tikal had the strength to reclaim its independence. He wanted to strike quickly and decisively and his first target was his brother. In 672 he attacked and captured Dos Pilas and sent his brother running. For five years the chase him across the Yucatan and just as he was finally within his grasp, Nuun was unexpectedly met in battle by Yuknoom in 677 and was defeated in battle. B'alaj was restored to his throne at Dos Pilas once again. Nuun did not lick his wounds for long. This brother's spat came to its bloody conclusion in 679 when Nuun met B'alaj and forces from Calakmul in their final battle. Again, we do not have the written records of the battle, but the inscriptions tell us that it was one of the largest in Maya history. Pools of blood soaked the Earth, broken spears and piles of skulls littered the battlefield and Nuun Ujol Chaak, the man that attempted to bring Tikal out of its dark age was dead. Surprisingly this was not the end of Tikal. Nuun's son, Jasaw Chan K'awiil (Yah-Saw), took his place on the throne in 682. He seems to have bided his time, built up relations with his subjects and allies and also reasserted Tikal's Teotihuacan heritage. Yuknoom would die in 686 and B'alaj would follow in 692. Jasaw used this transition phase to the advantage of Tikal. In the Maya's own words, he brought down the flint axe and shield on Calakmul's new King. In a battle timed to occur exactly on the 256th anniversary of the death of Spearthrower Owl, the forces of Jasaw defeated Calakmul in battle and captured a sacred effigy of one of their Gods. This was not only a military defeat but a painful spiritual one. A month later a triumph was held for Jasaw in Tikal and he entered the city to a cacophony of chanting and adulations with a trail of captives and plunder pouring in behind him. The cement his victory he had the captured Calakmul king sacrificed. The Second Tikal-Calakmul War ended with Tikal's prestige restored and Calakmul started to decline. However, Tikal would not bask in the glory of this victory for long. The collapse of the Calakmul hegemony along with the decades of constant warfare had caused an irreversible shift in the Maya world. It is about to enter a spiral that will rip people away from their cities and cast a shadow across their history.

7 Why did the Maya civilization collapse?

By the early 8th century the Maya civilization was at its zenith. Building and maintaining cities of such scale that future explorers hypothesized that they must have been built by lost tribes of Israel or the Phoenicians. But only 150 years later the flourishing Classic Maya civilization had crumbled, undergoing one of the most devastating social and demographic upheavals in human history. Yet the Maya wouldn't succumb to Spanish control until 1697, nearly 200 years after the Aztecs and Inca. The great collapse and fall of the Maya are a story of change, triumph and tragedy, where ancient thrones will be shattered but from them new powers will emerge. There is no disputing that the Maya civilisation in the southern lowlands underwent some sort of collapse. The prevailing question is, why? Unfortunately, we do not have any records of the collapse from the Maya themselves. The stelae that we rely upon usually focus on the lives of god-kings rather than agricultural yields and the books that may have contained these records have been reduced to ash. What we do know is that in the 8th and 9th centuries alliances began breaking down, trade declined, and intense conflicts spiraled out of control. The greatest example of this is the Tikal-Calakmul wars we saw in the previous video. By 830 AD the large-scale constructions that we associate with the Maya had mostly stopped and at Itzimte we see the final date carved on a stela - the 16th of January 910, which marked that one of humanities brightest lights, the Classic urban civilization of the Maya was at an end. Similar to the fall of Rome or the Hittites, we know that there is more than one single reason for the collapse. Most Mayanists agree that 3 major factors led to the Classic Maya collapse: Warfare, Environmental Collapse, and Drought. We'll start with warfare first because it seems to have the earliest arriving cause. As these increasingly frequent wars continued to plague the southern lowlands the level of violence and destruction they brought increased. The Maya kings had been warring since the pre-Classic period, but things had escalated and warfare was now interrupting the daily lives of the common people. The gorgeous temples and palaces that once glorified Maya cities were turned to rubble, some even torn down in order to build fortifications, which began to spring up around once un-walled Maya cities. Some cities even had defensive walls that passed right through the middle of them. Settlements began to regress, pyramids lay unfinished and kings unburied. Hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into the cities from the countryside, swelling their populations. Tikal which had a population between 60-80 thousand for most of its history may have skyrocketed to 200,000 during this period. This was compounded by environmental issues. As we discussed in the first video in this series the Yucatán is quite a hostile environment and the Maya needed to develop ingenious and costly methods to thrive within it. In order to fuel their ever-growing cities and to make the plaster that covered them massive swaths of forest had to be cleared. This deforestation increased soil erosion in an environment in which soils were already quite thin. The success of the Maya city-states was sowing the seeds of their destruction. The final fatal factor, was drought. The Maya were one of the most adept civilizations when it came to drought management. Their aqueducts and cisterns still dotted the jungles that have consumed their cities. However, the sheer length of the droughts that struck them between 800 and 1100 AD was apocalyptic. There was a 40-year drought between 820-860, another around 930 and then from 1000 - 1100 there was another. A 100-year long drought. The area was already suffering from incessant warfare. Soils were less productive than ever. Kings were embroiled in century long rivalries and now farmers had to plant seeds of corn into the dry dirt year after year, only

to see nothing sprout. All that was left to do was curse the gods...or the person who was supposed to maintain their favour, which in Maya culture was the king! Now that the Maya kings had failed to please the gods and bring down the rains the people may have risen up against them. Bloody revolutions could have been the tragic final act for these cities and the position of divine Kingship in Maya society dwindled or was cut away. Any of these factors individually could probably have been easily overcome by the Maya. The destruction from endless wars could have been healed, drought could be managed, new farming methods can be developed and new political systems implemented. But all of these together spelled disaster. Complex and compounding factors are what brought it about. But what happened to the survivors of this collapse? Not everyone died, the southern lowlands had a population in the millions. It is a great mystery of archaeology but we do have some records of them migrating north. During this period, the Terminal Classic, the northern cities such as Chichen Itza and Uxmal began to soar. So, while the southern lowlands ceased to create monuments or house giant cities the northern lowlands actually flourished. The Maya did not disappear after their collapse which is an extremely popular misconception rather their civilization underwent a massive shift. Chichen Itza rose to become a major regional power. By adapting to the political changes brought about by the collapse. Such as abandoning god-kings and replacing them with ruling councils and by dominating the trades routes in the region, especially salt, it became the political center of the northern lowlands from the 10th to the 13th century. Building famous structures like El Castillo which during the Spring and Autumn equinoxes, creates an awe-inspiring effect of a serpent wriggling down its staircase. Mayapan took over the title of regional power after Chichen Itza declined in the 11th century. But it itself would be abandoned in 1448 for reasons similar to the collapse earlier. This period saw a series of natural disasters and increased warfare that would only end around 1511. At which point the Spanish arrived. This is the beginning of the end for independent Maya civilization. To understand this conflict, we need to understand what the Spanish brought. First, were diseases previously unknown on the continent. Smallpox, influenza, and measles wreaked havoc on native populations in what is probably the most unparalleled destruction of life in human history. Within a hundred years 90% of the native population was gone. While the Maya were the first of the Mesoamerican civilizations to have contact with the Spanish they were spared for a few years, as the gold-rich Aztecs in Mexico drew their attention instead. The Spanish conquest of the Maya only truly began in 1528, spearheaded by Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers, veterans of the conquest of the Aztecs. Taking down the Maya would not be a short affair. Unlike the Aztecs or Inca, the Maya did not have a central authority that could be kidnapped. The Maya themselves also fought in a different fashion to the Aztecs. They attacked Spanish camps at night, lay traps for them in the jungle, and deployed rapid hit and run tactics. The fighting in those jungles was unlike anything the Spanish had dealt with before. Smallpox had reached some parts of the Maya area even before the conquistadors began their invasion. When the Alvarado brothers entered those jungles and cities they were walking through an already post-apocalyptic landscape, as the germs had initiated a deadly blitzkrieg assault before they could. Resistance was still fierce however. It wasn't until 1542 that the Spaniards could even establish a capital in the region, Mérida. The Spanish had to invade and conquer each Maya city or group separately. When they finally established control over one region as soon as they moved to the next it would rebel. As the conquistadors underwent their incredible conquest they were accompanied by thousands of natives from both Mexico and the Maya area, some of them already veterans from previous conquests. Certain

powerful Maya families, rulers, and cities saw the short-term benefit that siding with the Spanish could bring. We have a cloth painting from the era, showing these allies assisting conquistador Jorge de Alvarado in his campaign of 1527 to 1529. In 1541 the Maya were granted a brief respite when Pedro de Alvarado died, but the most powerful Maya kingdoms such as the K'iche and Kaqchikel were also at an end. Without them a large-scale resistance would be impossible and the chance of a unified Maya resistance to the conquistadors was gone. The final holdout against the Spanish was the city of Nojpetén, which was controlled by the Itza people. It was located in the middle of a lake in Northern Guatemala and surrounded by defensive walls. This city wouldn't be taken until 1697 when Martín de Urzúa assaulted the city with a large attack boat outfitted with cannon and mortars. The population of the city attempted a last stand. They swarmed the boat with canoes but were beaten back and shot in the water as they tried to swim away. The city was bombarded and taken on the 10th of March 1697. But the resistance never truly halted for the Maya. Rebellions by the Yucatec Maya in 1847 and 1860 came close to retaking the entire Yucatan. In 1910 came another rebellion against the dictatorial regime of Porfirio Díaz and the Zapatista National Liberation Army has challenged the Mexican authorities since the initial uprising of 1994. Today there are 7 million Maya living in Guatemala, southern Mexico and the Yucatán Peninsula, Belize, El Salvador, and western Honduras. Some have integrated into the Hispanic Mestizo culture while others continue to live a more traditional life, still speaking one of the over 30 Mayan languages and counting the passing days on ancient calendars. The Maya are an odd example of a civilisation, they have been a part of human history for an incredibly long time. They have risen and fallen and risen and fallen a number of times. They have been invaded by foreign powers and dealt with apocalyptic disease yet they still have never truly been conquered as their culture and spirit has seemingly continued unbroken until this day.

8 Aztecs: from Refugees to Hegemons

In the middle of a marshy island, so useless that the 1 million people living in the lands around it saw no reason to claim the it, rose and empire of people with such a fierce will that they smashed every obstacle placed in front of them and conquered their world. Gold, silver, feathers, chocolate, bark paper books and lines of captives destined for sacrifice streamed into the metropolis that was Tenochtitlan along its innumerable streets and canals. This constantly moving anthill was the center of the Aztec empire and this is the story of how a destitute people conquered their world. By the 13th century Mexico had already seen the rise and fall of great urban cavillations such as the Teotihuacanos and Toltecs. Called Anahuac by the Mexica, the Valley of Mexico was home to over 1 million people, making it one of the most densely populated area on Earth at the time. It had been a hub for urban civilizations for thousands of years. Now two new states had achieved dominance over the region. Culhuacan located in the south and Azcapotzalco in the north east. It was into this already long-established world that the Aztecs suddenly entered. They were the last of the nomadic tribes to migrate into the valley from the North. The Valley was already quite full and so the Aztecs were repulsed and ejected from wherever they tried to settle. They may have spoken Nahua the language of the great Toltecs, but other than that they were completely alien to the civilized inhabitants of the region. The Aztecs however, brought an unmatched skill in warfare and soon found themselves fighting as mercenaries for both Culhuacan and Azcapotzalco. But their penchant for violence and sacrifice soon disgusted their employers. After sacrificing the daughter of the King of Culhuacan the Mexica were driven into Lake Texcoco. Their patron god, Huitzilopochtli, had promised them that they would find their true home when they saw an eagle poised upon a cactus, eating a serpent. Upon entering the blue water of Lake Texcoco on a miserable swampy island, with little arable land, no wood nor stone, they saw their God's sign. They settled there in 1325 but it would be another 50 years until they were organized enough to name a King, Acamapichtli. Barely a century later, this destitute people, had soaked up the culture of the region, named themselves the successors of the Toltecs, and began an incredible series of conquests. The Mexica built their great empire by forming a triple alliance with two other city-states, Texcoco and Tlacopan. Together they sacked Azcapotzalco and became the dominant power in the region. Now free of any competing states, the Mexica conquered from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific and then south towards modern day Guatemala. Flooded with plunder their capital, Tenochtitlan, soon surpassed Teotihuacan and Toltec Tula. Great palaces, pyramids, and gardens rose out of the waters on Lake Texcoco as the Mexica built a floating city that left the Spanish conquistadors gasping upon first seeing it. Soon Tlacopan and then Texcoco found themselves in the backseat of an alliance dominated by the ever-growing power of the Mexica. By 1500, the Kings of the other 2 states were basically civil servants to the Mexica Emperor. Taxes and tribute were supposed to be divided amongst the 3 but it appears the Mexica in Tenochtitlan shared what they wanted when it wanted. This Triple Alliance formed what we know as the Aztec Empire and was on its way to becoming a single headed Mexica run state when the Spanish arrived. It's important to note that this is the Aztecs own history of themselves, not an exact and perfect timeline of events, and it is known that a certain Mexica advisor, Tlacaelel, a man that helped forge the triple alliance, transformed Huitzilopochtli from a tribal god to the supreme patron of the Mexica, massively increased emphasis on human sacrifice, and essentially established much of the imperial systems of the empire, erased much

of Mexica history. This man in order to promote the new Mexica empire burned and destroyed evidence of their humbler past. Let's take a closer look at Tenochtitlan, its full name being Mexico-Tenochtitlan. One of the Spanish soldiers, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, wrote this about his initial impression of the city. "We were amazed/ on account of the great towers and pyramids rising from the water, and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream " The City was unlike anything in the Old World. It would have been bigger than any city in Spain with a population of at least 250,000, possibly more, making it one of the world's largest cities. The Spanish particularly found the botanical gardens and zoos to be extremely impressive. The Mexica had transformed the poor land into highly productive gardens through canal irrigation and the use of chinampas, which were highly fertile artificial islands. The city became so productive that it could support a population level that after being nearly wiped out by the conquistadors, their native allies, and smallpox, would not be reached again until the 20th century. The citizens used the canals for transport as much as they used the streets. Hernan Cortés speaks of the people 'talking as they go along, some on the land, the others on the water.' The main causeways leading to the city were cut by wooden bridges which could be removed in case of attack or if a canoe needed to pass through. Water was the superior means of transport in a country without a single draft animal. Within the city, teachers and students met in the calmecac and telpuchcalli. The schools were most Mexica children received educations. Making it one of the only societies at the time where nearly all were educated. Streets and canals were jammed with merchants and porters that brought tribute and goods in from across the diverse empire. The Aztecs ran a tribute-based empire. So rather than invading lands, killing everyone, and taking over the territory, they instead forced the past enemies to pay tribute. Everything else stayed the same, people kept their kings and gods and homes. This made the Mexica incredibly rich and widely hated. Pyramids and palaces dotted the city were priests praised the gods and carried out bloody sacrifices. Aqueducts brought fresh water into the city and every day thousands of street cleaners swept across the city to keep the main streets clear and neat. All on a tiny island in the middle of a lake. Let's move on to what is probably the most controversial and infamous aspect of Aztec civilization, human sacrifice. If you know anything about the Aztec civilization it is most likely this. That they practiced human sacrifice is beyond doubt. To the Aztecs, there was no activity more glorious than capturing men on the battlefield or to die there for Huitzilopochtli. The culture of Mexica sacrifice is best explained by Michael D Coe. "The victims were ideally enemy warriors; when an Aztec took a captive in action, he said to him, "Here is my well-beloved son," and the captive responded "Here is my revered father," After the victim had been ritually bathed, there were five possible modes of sacrifice. The usual one was by stretching the prone body over a sacrificial stone, opening the chest with a knife of flint or obsidian, and ripping out the heart, which was then offered to the gods. All warriors believed that they were destined to die this way, being transformed on death into hummingbirds which went to join the Sun God in his celestial paradise. In all likelihood, several hundreds, perhaps even a few thousand, young men so lost their lives in the Aztec capital each year" This was done because in the Mexica worldview, the gods needed nourishment, worship, and payback. The world had a finite amount of energy and the gods needed energy to keep the universe alive. Thus, energy had to be released from living things to pay the gods. It was necessary in order to insure the sun rose each morning. Each time a priest took a life they were keeping the doom of their world at bay. Due to this cultural trait Mexica warfare had a huge

emphasis on capture rather than killing combatants on the battlefield. Men that would have died of their wounds or infections on battlefields elsewhere, instead died on sacrificial stones in Mexico. This also resulted in events known as "Flowery Wars". A perpetual war where both states would fight but never finish each other off primarily fought against the Tlaxcala. If the Aztecs had focused their might on the war they could have wiped out the Tlaxcala. But it would take a huge toll on their empire and resources. So, they instead pinned down the Tlaxcala while at the same time guaranteeing a constant stream of captives and training. The Mexica also instituted economic sanctions on the Tlaxcala and forbid anyone to trade certain items with them, such as cotton and salt. Without knowing it they had provided a powerful and well-trained ally to the Spanish as the Tlaxcala would supply infantry and refuge to Cortés. Let's have a look at the military aspect of the Aztec Empire. Mesoamerican warfare in general is fascinating as it was very different from that of the Old World. For one the cost of movement in Mesoamerica was so much higher than in the Old World. There were no animals that could be used to transport anything. Which obviously had an enormous effect on warfare. Without horses or donkeys the soldiers had to carry their provisions themselves or would need special porters to do it for them. Meaning that Mesoamerican armies could rarely travel for more than 8-9 days on their own supplies. So waging wars more than 50 or so kilometers away was a logistical nightmare. Promotion in the army was based on the amount of captives a soldier made and if a man proved himself he may join one of the knightly orders and become a Jaguar or Eagle warrior. Your average Mexica warrior would be equipped with a round shield. A wooden sword tipped with razor sharp obsidian blades, known as the macuahuitl. Some would have bows but most would be equipped with an atlatl, a spear thrower device that hurled projectiles. Along with thick cotton armour. When battles started it was unlike anything in the old world. Experts with ropes and nets would try and capture as many men as they could and warriors would spread out and fight one on one in separate duels, trying to knock the other out rather than kill them. Nobles and generals wore highly visible symbols on their soldiers, tall reed and feather constructions. This was so they could easily be seen in battle and their deeds noted. However, it only made it easier for Cortés and his men to find them during battles and wipe out the Aztec military command easily. All of this of puts into perspective how the final war of the Mexica was doomed. The Mexica and Spanish were not fighting the same war. The Mexica wasted precious time capturing Spaniards or their native allies in battle, while the Spanish focused on killing as many soldiers as possible. Even when the war was lost the Mexica would have assumed a bitter negotiating process was about to begin were the Spanish would demand tribute just as the Mexica did when they conquered. They could never imagine that their entire civilization along with their gods and emperors would be snuffed out.

9 Aztecs: Arrival of Cortes and the Conquistadors

The Conquest of Mexico was the fatal result of the meeting of two worlds. The Spanish conquest was shaped both by military, but also by language, diplomacy, and laws of Spain and the Triple Alliance. In this video we will look at how Hernán Cortés started the conquest of Mexico. Moctezuma had been tlatoani of the Aztec Empire since 1502. Under his rule the Empire had reached never before seen heights and its borders reached their greatest extent. His people were made rich by the taxes and tribute flowing in from across the empire. When reports began to slowly trickle in of strange encounters on the coast with pale skinned men they seemed innocuous. Moctuzema's capital was already filled with foreigners and the air at the great market of Tlatelolco buzzed with a cacophony of different languages. Meanwhile in Cuba event were ramping up. After 2 disastrous expeditions, Governor Diego Velázquez, was planning a third, hoping that riches could be found in the nearby landmass. Hernando Cortés was appointed the "Caudillo" of the upcoming expedition and tasked with "exploration and modest trade". However, soon Velázquez lost his trust in Cortés and another Caudillo was appointed. Soon this captain was murdered, while Cortés hastily left the island for the Yucatan on the 18th of February 1519. He had 530 Europeans soldiers, among them 30 crossbowmen, 2 arquebusemen, 2 conquistadoras, and also a few hundred Cuban natives and African slaves. Most importantly 16 horses were also taken along with war dogs, usually Irish wolfhounds and mastiffs. Cortés also had several cannons. Cortés won his first victory in Maya territory, but it was linguistic in nature, as he discovered a castaway Spanish priest, Gerónimo de Aguilar, who learned one of the Maya languages. After moving on from Cozumel and landing at Potonchan, Cortés defeated the local Maya in a battle and he was given some women by them. One of them spoke both Maya and the Mexica language. Dubbed La Malinche she translated Mexica into Maya, which was then translated by Gerónimo de Aguilar into Spanish. Many things were lost in translation, but for the first-time diplomacy between the natives and Spaniards was possible. Language would become just as important as horse or cannon in this conflict. With translators by his side and tales of a gold rich empire further North, Cortés moved further up the coast and landed in modern day Vera Cruz. Over the next few days Moctezuma's diplomats arrived. Golden gifts were poured upon the conquistadors, sleeping quarters were built and servants were made available for them. As both of these representatives of two great empires mingled and gawked at each on the beach, one of the most dangerous questions in history was asked. Cortés said to the Mexica ambassador, "Does Moctezuma possess much gold?". The response was "Yes". Moctezuma was in the House of Serpents, a part of his Zoo when the messengers arrived. These were the same men reported over the years. They rode bizarre looking deer and had sticks that created lighting along with beasts that launched rocks from their bellies that could destroy hillsides. Moctezuma the all-powerful god emperor, who was famously decisive, was unsure of how to proceed. Should he kill these foreigners immediately? This would violate all Mexica diplomatic customs. Could he use them for his own gain then? What exactly were their motives and could they threaten the stability of his empire? The emperor's brother Cuitláhuac along with his cousin Cuauhtémoc continuously pushed the idea that these were raiders, who shouldn't be trusted. Cuitláhuac advised Moctezuma "not to allow into your house someone who will put you out of it". Meanwhile, Cortés was discussing Moctezume, with the local Totonac chief, who informed the conquistadors that his people had to pay yearly tribute to the Mexica This chief informed Cortés of others that disliked Moctezuma: Lords who

felt passed over for rulership in Texcoco, vassals unhappily paying tribute and especially the Tlaxcala, would all join his side if he chose to march on Tenochtitlan. This promise changed everything for Cortés. Until now his highest goal would have been to win some land and to extract as much gold as possible. Now the opportunity to take an empire for himself was within reach. However, Cortés he had another issue to resolve. Since his departure from Cuba, he had been acting illegally. Not only had he left after being replaced, his orders to explore and trade had obviously been completed at this point. In order to circumnavigate the legality of his actions Cortés and his men founded a town - Villa Rica de La Vera Cruz. A town council was quickly appointed and Cortés 'presented' himself before them. It was decided that Cortés' mission had been completed and he stepped down as Caudillo. Immediately the council nominated Cortés as captain of His Majesty's armies until instructions would state otherwise. This was an obvious misuse of the law but if Cortés could conquer Mexico quickly then it would surely be accepted by the King. With his translators and native allies, Cortez set out towards Tenochtitlan. The expedition soon entered Tlaxcala territory. The first encounters were violent. Constantly harassed by Tlaxcala and Otomí warriors the conquistadors suffered their worst losses up until then. A number of invaluable horses were killed and many Spaniards were wounded. They were overwhelmed by the Tlascala numbers, but these numbers also allowed the horses and cannon to smash through the tightly packed armies and thousands were killed. However, the Spaniards suffered some casualties in each battle and that was untenable for the conquistadors. They couldn't defeat the Tlaxcala outright and couldn't continue taking small casualties. The Tlaxcala had been in a perpetual state of war with the Empire and soon concluded that these powerful foreigners were more useful to them alive than dead. No one had more motive to topple the Aztec Empire. On the 23 September 1519, Cortés enter Tlaxcala city and an alliance was secured, Cortés now determined set off towards the Tenochtitlan with an army that was less than 5% Spanish. While Cortés moved his massive multiethnic army through Tlaxcala territory, Moctezuma's emissaries Moctezuma continued to visit him, bringing gifts, and warning him that the Tlaxcala could not be trusted. Cortés ignoring that continued to march towards Mexica allied city of Cholula home to the largest pyramid structure on Earth and an extremely important pilgrimage site in the Mesoamerican world. The lords of Cholula welcomed them, however, the Spaniards suspected a conspiracy, planned either by the lords of Cholula or Moctezuma. Cortés asked them to meet him at the temple of Quetzalcoatl. They poured into the courtyard after which the doors were closed by the conquistadors. Cortés demanded to know why the lords had planned to kill him and his men and decreed that by the laws of Spain treason such as this must be punished. A harquebus was fired as a signal and the conquistadors began to cut down the lords. The killing continued in the streets. By the end of the 2-day sacking, the city was in flames and three thousand lay dead. Prisoners were sent off to Tlaxcala for sacrifice and Cortés and his army again set off. On the 8th of November 1519 the Spanish and their native allies marched down the main causeway to Tenochtitlan. Crossbowmen, gunmen, horses, and war-painted natives streamed up the wooden causeway in a tight formation. Despite all that had occurred, Moctezuma agreed to meet Cortés on the causeway. The Mexica tradition of hospitality could not be broken. On that causeway, an emperor and a conquistador met and the history of our world changed forever. The Spaniards were given lodgings in a palace that once belonged to Moctezuma's father. Over the next few days they toured the city which awed the Spaniards. However, soon they noticed their precarious position and became restless - the Mexica could easily kill them all in their

sleep or cut off any retreat by removing the wooden bridges. The Tlaxcala's distrust only worried the conquistadors more. Soon Cortés found his men in a near panic and wanting to leave. In order to restore faith in the mission a decision had to be made. Cortés and Moctezuma met on the 14th of November for one of their regular discussions. They had become accustomed to speaking to each other about their respective empires and religions. With him Cortés brought about 30 armed men, as well as his interpreters. Soon Cortés accused Moctezuma of treason. He said that he was willing to forgive, Moctezuma if he accompanied the Spaniards to their lodgings. If he made a noise however, his captains may kill him. Thus, Moctezuma traveled across Tenochtitlan on a litter carried by his noblemen, several of whom asked if they should fight the Spaniards, but were ordered not to, and started ruling his empire as a prisoner. Curiosity of Mexica turned to resentment and for the first time they were questioning the actions of their Emperor. Meanwhile, Cortés got the news that a Spanish ship had been spotted near Vera Cruz. Pánfilo de Narváez had been sent by Velázquez to kill or capture Cortés. Leaving his "least reliable soldiers" under the command of Pedro de Alvarado to guard Moctezuma, Cortés set out against De Narváez. He brought La Malinche with him which left the Spanish in Tenochtitlan without a translator. The mood in the streets and squares near the Spanish quarters was volatile - the Mexica no longer considered the Spaniards to be guests. The tensions came to a head during the celebration of the Feast of Toxcatl. In the leading up to the feast it seems Alvarado grew more and more paranoid. He captured and tortured citizens to learn about what was going on. The forced answers and bad translations only proved more to him that the people were planning a revolt. The fear of being attacked and sacrificed could no longer be contained. Alvarado decided to strike first. The day of the festival arrived. Priests made offerings, the music of drums and flutes filled the air, feathered dancers put on magnificent shows, while onlookers watched and prayed. Alvarado and his troops entered the temple grounds wearing armour. Little attention was paid to them. Conquistadors slowly moved into strategic locations around the festival goers while others blocked the exits. Alvarado shouted "LET THEM DIE!" and swords were drawn. Soon 3 thousand people lay dead in the temple and the killing continued in the streets. Most of the Aztec nobility lay dead. Only Moctezuma and a lucky few survived. Madness took the city as the Mexica organized a counter-attack. Things settled down only after Alvarado forced Moctezuma to address his people and beg them to stop. The Spaniards hid in their quarters as the city mourned. Meanwhile, Cortés had won his battle at the coast and absorbed most of enemy soldiers into his own army. As he entered Tenochtitlan the city was completely silent. Cortés met with Alvarado in their quarters and heard about what had transpired. The Spanish in the city soon found themselves attacked whenever they ventured into the streets. Cortés was surrounded and besieged. The people had rallied behind Moctezuma's brother, Cuitláhuac, who planned the resistance for some time now... Join us on Sunday for the bloody conclusion in this series - The Siege of Tenochtitlan. Make sure you are subscribed to our channel and pressed the bell button. We would like to express our gratitude to our Patreon supporters and channel members, who make the creation of our videos possible. Now, you can also support us by buying our merchandise via the link the description. This is the Kings and Generals channel, and we will catch you on the next one.

10 Fall of Tenochtitlan (1521) - Spanish-Aztec War DOCUMENTARY

Initially friendly, relationships between the Aztecs and the Spaniards became hostile, as the later took the emperor Moctezuma hostage and killed many local nobles. But now the great city of Tenochtitlan is in open rebellion and the forces of Cortés are stuck in the middle of a hostile city. Yet the Spanish conquistador has more tricks up his sleeve. The bloody battle that will decide the fate of millions will soon reach its conclusion. Rocks were flung into the building from nearby roofs and the Spaniards quarters were repeatedly set on fire. Cortés sent Moctezuma to the roof of the building to beg for peace. His own people pelted him with rocks. The sources disagree here, but Moctezuma either died from his wounds caused by the rocks or was strangled by the conquistadors. He no longer served a purpose. The Spaniards noted that the Mexica did not fight at night. So, during a rainy night on the 1st of July 1520, later called the La Noche Triste, the Night of Sorrow, they attempted to flee. As the bridges had been removed, Cortés' men constructed a portable bridge to cross. Most of the expedition had crossed when they were spotted. The drums of war on top of the great pyramid were sounded. The retreat quickly turned into a panic. The entire causeway was then under attack from innumerable canoes. The bridge was broken. Half the Spanish-Tlaxcalan army was thrashing in the water. Many of the soldiers and the horses, the cannon and much of the gold was lost. Bodies began to fill the gaps in the causeway and men had to run across their fallen comrades. Cortés himself fell in the water, but was rescued. The Spaniards eventually managed to crawl to the mainland. During La Noche Triste ¾ of Cortés' men were lost. It was the worst defeat suffered by Cortés. His native allies lost thousands. But he could still continue fighting and retreated to Tlaxcala to lick his wounds. However, the Mexica could hardly celebrate. Tenochtitlan was badly burned, 2 kings of the Triple Alliance were dead, and the nobility had been wiped out. Cuitláhuac was quickly elected Emperor, and tried to organise further counter-attacks against the Spanish. He offered a perpetual alliance to the Tlaxcala and this offer caused divides within the Tlaxcalan leadership. However, another deadly weapon soon aided the Spaniards. One of the men had smallpox. Within a year 40% of Tenochtitlan succumbed to the disease along with its new Emperor Cuitáhuac. Farmers lay dead in their fields, famine hit, and tributes stopped coming in. Cuitláhuac was succeeded in Tenochtitlan by his cousin, Cuauhtémoc. While he was being crowned, Cortés was planning something that hadn't been seen in the region since the rise of the Mexica... a siege. He would choke and and starve Tenochtitlan. One by one the smallpox-weakened cities around Tenochtitlan fell fell to the Spanish-Tlaxcalan forces. Soon Tenochtitlan and its neighbour, Tlatelolco, flooded with refugees from destroyed cities, stood alone. With the city now surrounded Cortés began planing for a siege. Using the now Spanish controlled Texcoco as an arsenal, the Spanish built 12 flat-bottomed brigantines. Due to recent reinforcements the Spaniards numbered about 90 horsemen, 120 crossbowman and arquebusiers, and several hundred footmen, alongside 3 large and 15 small cannons. According to the sources the number of native allies was anywhere from 50,000 to 500,000. Cortés had more than enough allies for labour and fighting in the upcoming siege. He organised his forces into four divisions. One on the water and 3 land divisions, which would be captained by Pedro de Alvarado, Gonzalo de Sandoval, and Cristóbal de Olid. Each had around around 30 horsemen, 14 crossbowmen and arquebusiers, along with 250 footmen, alongside thousands of native warriors and labourers. Alvarado would

assault via the Tlacopan causeway, Olid via Coyoacán causeway and Sandoval via the Iztapalapa causeway. Cortés commanded the ships. He knew that taking the causeways and securing water control were the only ways to take the city. On the 22nd of May 1521 the captains left for their respective causeways. Once in position, Alvarado cut the great aqueduct at Chapultepec, forcing the Mexica to drink from the few fresh sources within the city. Cuauhtémoc had allowed the Spanish-Tlaxcalan forces to take up positions around the city without much of a fight. He had learned that fighting the Spanish on open ground was far too disadvantageous. On 1 June, the Spanish ships sailed out into the lake. Reinforcing this armada were apparently 16,000 canoes under the Texcoco general, Ixtlilxochitl. Cortés first used them to assault the Mexica intelligence centre at Tepeapulco. From there smoke signals informed Tenochtitlan of the Spanish movements. Thousands of war canoes launched from the canals in Tenochtitlan, smashed against the ships. The overwhelming size and firepower of the brigantines proved too much and soon established dominance over the lake. For the following weeks little progress was made. By day the conquistadors tried to fight up the causeways towards the city. War canoes on their flanks, wooden spikes planted in the causeway gaps, and thousands Mexica warriors hindered their progress. Each day the Spaniards would withdraw back to their camps on the mainland. Each morning they awoke to all their progress undone and new gaps dug. In an attempt to break the stalemate, Cortés planned an assault with the goal of piercing deep into the city. On the 10th of June he ordered Sandoval and Alvarado to fight as hard as possible up their causeways and move towards Axayacatl. Cortés and Olid, with 200 infantry and thousands of natives marched from the Xoloc causeway with naval support on their flanks. The fighting was heavy throughout the day. Native allies worked furiously to fill the gaps in the causeway. Ships rained fire down upon the defending warriors and canoes, and by the afternoon Cortés' division had reached the Gate of the Eagle. Cortés charged into a plaza and set up a large cannon and began to fire into the mass of Mexica warriors, challenging them. They took control of the temple precinct rapidly, but soon the war drums atop the great pyramids sounded and it became clear that a great host of Mexica warriors were on the way. By foot and canoes they swarmed the precinct and assaulted Cortés' division. Cortés ordered a full retreat, leaving behind the cannon, which the Mexica pushed into the lake. While retreating, Cortés ordered the men to burn as many buildings as possible, to remove cover from which the Mexica could fire down on them and to flatten the ground for cavalry. Sandoval and Alvarado made progress up the causeway but could not push into the city. While the assault failed it did change the mind of some neutral native city-states. More allies began to join Cortés' cause. With more native allies the work to fill in the canals could be done quicker. Unsettled by Cortés' progress at filling in the causeway and pushing into the city, Cuauhtémoc ordered the bulk of his people into the precincts at Tlatelolco. Cortés maintained this strategy of slowly filling in the causeways, moving inch by inch into the city, and burning and destroying what he could before retreating. Patience was the key to victory not brash actions and recklessness. De Alvarado, though could no longer wait. He decided to take half of his cavalry and push forward up the causeway. The charge broke the Mexica defenses and the Spaniards chased them into the city. It was a trap. Soon Spaniards were among houses, surrounded by a horde of warriors. Their retreat was cut off by the canoes. Pursued and trapped they had no choice but to try and wade through the water. Some impaled themselves on spikes planted there, others were captured, and many others were chopped down by the Mexica. Few managed to escape. Cortés was furious and travelled across the Lake to personally scold Alvarado. But after

noting how far Alvarado had managed to get, he decided that a concentrated push to the Tlatelolco marketplace should be their goal. Other factors were also pressuring Cortés to try more desperate measures. Food and morale were getting low and the Mexica had learned how to attack the ships. Numerous Spaniards had been dragged from the ships and some of them destroyed. Control of the lake was now challenged. On the 30th of June, Cortés pushed up the southern causeway in a massive assault and pushed into the city. Then he divided his forces into three groups, each tasked with taking one road leading to the great marketplace in Tlatelolco. De Alderete's group made rapid progress towards the marketplace, shoddily filling in gaps over canals as they went. As they neared the marketplace the Mexica sprung an ambush and the Spaniards were forced to retreat across the hastily filled canals. But their bridge was too narrow. Cortés hearing of the disaster rode to assist. The fighting was so chaotic that all Cortés could do was pull drowning men from the water, but most of them were being pull up from the other side by the Mexica warriors and dragged off. In the chaos Cortés was seized by the Mexica and only the quick actions of his footman, who sacrificed himself, saved him. A few dozen Spaniards and thousands of native allies had died in the fighting with dozens of Spaniards taken alive. the conquistadors could see their comrades dragged up the pyramids in the city and their hearts offered to the gods. This completely demoralized the conquistadors and their allies. But that soon changed: A Spanish ship had docked nearby, bringing crossbows, horses, and desperately needed gunpowder. The bitter back and forth started again, with the filling of the canals and the fighting on the causeways. It seemed however, that with each passing night the Mexica rebuilt less and less. By now the city was suffering from extreme starvation and the people were forced to drink the salty lake water. Now Cortés was able to make permanent progress into the city. The allies who were used to fill the gaps, now served as warriors. During the final days of July, the Spanish instigated a series of surges into the city that pushed the Mexica further into the Tlatelolco marketplace and surrounding precincts. On 27 July, Alvarado finally pushed into the marketplace and killed those left defending it. Cuauhtémoc's last-ditch effort to push back the Spaniards was to elect a sacred quetzal-owl warrior. Placed in a ceremonial costume, covered with resplendent feathers and made to look massive by way of wooden frames, this warrior scared the Spaniards. Pushing through, this warrior is said to have captured three men at once and dragged them to Cuauhtémoc for immediate sacrifice. The Spaniards began to withdraw and Mexica morale increased as the quetzal-owl pushed further. But this final act of valour could not turn the tide of the siege. As reported by the native sources, the warrior dropped from a terrace never to be seen again. The Mexica could fight no more. Starvation had wrecked the city, disease had taken hold, and women and children were filling the ranks of the Mexica army. Cuauhtémoc knew the city was lost. Alvarado's men pushed into the final holdout in Tlatelolco on the 13th August. There they caught Cuauhtémoc in a canoe, hoping to flee the city, to raise the Mexica banner elsewhere. After he was seized, Tenochtitlan fell silent for the first time in two and a half months. A great city lay in ashes and the Aztec Empire was at an end, but modern Mexico had just been born. Gold and silver flowed back into Spain along with what are now modern food staples, such as corn, chocolate, vanilla, and chili. The Conquest of Mexico saw the first great meeting between the Old and New Worlds and the events that took place during it changed the fates of both worlds forever.